

prolonged rain, since people seem inclined to hold them as personally responsible, and I heard it suggested that they might do something in the same way as the African rain-makers, who employ synthetic magic to produce rain. To reverse the procedure, all that would be necessary to stop the floods would be for the Met. staff to walk around in duck trousers and straw boaters mopping their brows and complaining of sunstroke.

British Continental Airways state that on all lines their freight figures have increased 150 per cent. in between

In South Africa

AERODROMES in the Union are being rapidly improved. The new Rand Airport, which was recently opened, is almost as perfect as it is possible to make it, and the Greater Baragwanath Aerodrome in Johannesburg was opened by the Minister of Defence at the end of November. The Government has now embarked on a policy of arranging emergency landing grounds at fifty-mile intervals along all routes, and within the next few weeks the wireless triangulation of the Union will be complete. Free insurance up to £1,000 is allowed every passenger.

New Equipment for British Airways

AIRWORK Sales Department has received an order from British Airways for four new De Havilland 86a four-engined air liners, in connection with the latter's 1936 expansion programme. These machines will be fitted with Gipsy VI engines of the new Series II type, rated to give a higher continuous power output than the standard type, and enabling full advantage to be taken of the benefits of the De Havilland controllable-pitch airscrews which are to be used. Airwork has taken in part exchange a fleet of D.H. Dragons and Dragon Rapides, which will shortly be placed on the market extensively equipped, reconditioned and complete with twelve months' C. of As.

Welcoming the New Year

WHILST the New Year was being ushered in, Air Dispatch's Avro 642, carrying a party of sixteen, cruised over London's revelry. A special loud speaker was installed in the cabin, and the strains of dance music improved the occasion.

New Year's Eve was a busy day for the Avro. Earlier she had carried the ice-hockey team to Paris for an important match, and, after seeing the New Year in, continued carrying passengers for joy-rides over London until 3 a.m. Two hours later she was well on her way to Paris again with the newspapers.

Air Dispatch's £3 3s. return winter excursion trips to Paris have become extremely popular, and more than half the bookings have come from the Midlands and Northern England.

Across the South Atlantic

ON Friday evening of last week the "all-air" South Atlantic plans of Air France were suitably sealed with a cocktail party at Quaglino's. In all, fifty-seven experimental crossings have been made—fifteen by Capt. Jean Mermoz—and Air France now feel justified in instituting a 100 per cent. airborne mail service from London to the Pacific coast.

Letters posted at the G.P.O. up to 11.45 a.m. on Saturday will reach South America on Tuesday and Santiago on Wednesday.

Presently, it is hoped, passengers may be carried, and the most likely machine for this purpose is the Loire 102 flying boat, which is now nearing completion. This all-metal machine will be able to maintain a height of 9,000 feet with one motor out of action and the engines, in any case, can actually be serviced while the machine is in the air.

It is interesting to remember that, in addition to the three-engined Couzinet landplane, *Arc-en-Ciel*, four specially built machines have been used for the South Atlantic service. These are the Latécoère boat, *Croix-du-Sud*, the Bleriot *Santos-Dumont*, the Farman monoplane, *Centaur*, and, lastly, the *Ville de Buenos Aires*, a sister ship to the Latécoère, which was used for the first time this Christmas. Each of these machines has four engines.

As already announced in *Flight*, the big Latécoère, which has recently flown to the Windward Islands, is expected to be used for an experimental North Atlantic crossing, via the Azores and Bermuda, in April.

November and December or over—which is good going for winter time on newly opened routes.

There is something remarkably festive about a notice to radio operators which was issued by Air Ministry on December 31. It starts: "There is a tendency for trailing aerials to whip and to spin round in circles during reeling in and out, and this tendency is greatly increased if the reeling is effected rapidly or in a jerky manner." If for "trailing aerial" you read "trainee aeronaut," you will see what I mean.

A. VIATOR.

Ards Changes

AS from January 1, Lord Londonderry, who already owned the Ards Airport, Belfast, has taken over its entire management from Airworks, who were formerly managers on his behalf. This step involves for the present no changes in staff, but plans are on foot for the formation of a local flying club in the place of the existing branch of the Airwork School of Flying, which, after sixteen months' successful operation, is to be closed down.

Traffic Increases

CROYDON passenger figures for the year 1934 were 118,000 by all air lines. Heston carried 17,903 inward and outward passengers, and British airports, as a whole, carried 135,100, which means that without Croydon we should be in a poor way, and without Croydon and Heston we should be practically non-existent. Query: If other airports were at all properly equipped, would there be traffic?

Incidentally, the K.L.M. bulletin also gives some interesting passenger figures. While 21,327 people were carried by them in 1932, 47,701 were carried in 1933, 85,969 in 1934, and more than 100,000 in 1935.

The Nigerian Extension

IT was expected that, early this year, Elder's Colonial Airways would open the first section of the proposed route between Khartoum, Kano, Lagos, Accra, Kumasi, and Freetown, using D.H.86 machines. However, the necessary steps have not yet been taken to clear the aerodromes and surroundings of the mosquitoes which carry fever.

This measure is necessary if the service is to comply with the rules of the International Sanitary Convention and will, in any case, minimise the risk of service interruption at a later date. The first services, incidentally, will reach Kano and the line will be extended to Lagos during the year. Freetown, it seems, is still in the nature of a pious hope, though there is little doubt that the service will eventually reach its logical terminus.

The Mediterranean Tragedy

ALL but two mail bags had, it appeared been recovered from the Short Calcutta, *City of Khartoum*, by last Monday evening.

The boat was lost on the evening of the last day of the old year. Nine passengers and three members of the crew lost their lives, the only survivor being the pilot, Capt. V. G. Wilson, who was picked up by H.M.S. *Brilliant* after swimming for five hours. The facts that he was an extremely good swimmer and that the Calcutta has an open cockpit must have contributed, in no small measure, to his survival.

Until the findings of the official enquiry are made public it is only possible to guess at the cause of the disaster, which was the first fatal one for the Imperial flying boat fleet since the loss of the Calcutta in the Gulf of Genoa in October, 1929. There appears to be some doubt however, whether through shortage of fuel or from some other cause, the three engines did actually cut out when the machine was only two miles from Alexandria. In the dark, the pilot may have glided into the sea or held off too high and stalled. The boat was an hour and twenty minutes overdue, and this period would possibly be long enough to exhaust the fuel reserve.

It is of interest to note that, since the loss of the Avro Ten in December, 1933, Imperial Airways have carried 129,000 passengers and flown 6,800,000 miles. Lord Swinton sent a message of sympathy to Sir Eric Geddes, and he has, in turn, received sympathetic messages from the French Air Minister and from the Dutch Minister of Public Works.

Meanwhile, the Calcutta which has been used for flying boat training at A.S.T. during the past month has been flown to Alexandria to replace the *City of Khartoum*.